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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000445

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV
COMMERCE FOR ITA JEAN KELLY
TREASURY FOR OASIA JEFF NEIL
USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#), [ECON](#), [BM](#)

SUBJECT: JAPAN ON BURMA: WE WANT A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TOO

REF: A. TOKYO 1194

[B](#). 02 RANGOON 1447

[C](#). 02 RANGOON 1366

Classified By: COM CARMEN MARTINEZ FOR REASONS 1.5 (B,D)

[1](#). (C) Summary: Minutes from a short meeting between the Japanese Ambassador and the Burmese Minister of National Planning and Economic Development emphasize the new pro-engagement policy outlined by the Japanese at the recent ICG meeting in Tokyo. The Ambassador's remarks give some insight into Japan's vision of its policy in Burma, both bilateral and as part of the larger Japan-ASEAN relationship. End summary.

Japan Stresses its Independence

[2](#). (C) In a meeting on February 21, the Japanese Ambassador to Burma reiterated to the Minister of Economic Development and National Planning, U Soe Tha, Japan's determination to push ahead with a more ambitious policy of engagement with Burma. According to classified GOB minutes of this meeting, the Japanese Ambassador also gave the Minister a short readout of the Tokyo Informal Consultative Group (ICG) meeting that took place on February 15 (described in Ref A).

[3](#). (C) The minutes record that the Ambassador reported the ICG's conclusion that the United States, the United Kingdom, and "western groups" have not been successful in trying to pressure Burma. Instead, the international community should try a new "way" of extending more assistance to Burma. In that spirit, the Ambassador told the Minister Japan will provide more humanitarian assistance and advice on economic reform and political development. He added that Japan will begin to take action regardless of what other nations decide to do. The Ambassador stressed that other countries and international organizations are seeking their own ways to start assisting Burma. However, even if the international community does not join in, Japan will carry out its intentions -- even if the Japanese government has to "confront challenges" to do so.

[4](#). (C) The Japanese Ambassador, according to the minutes, went on to say that Japan must consider its relations with Burma in the larger context of Japan-ASEAN ties, and strengthening the influence of ASEAN. Somewhat more cryptically, the minutes record the Japanese Ambassador urging the Minister to ponder seriously the importance of Burma's relations with India and the PRC.

[5](#). (C) The Minister replied to the Ambassador quite positively, complimenting him for his understanding of the "true situation" in the country. He urged the Ambassador to work hard to ensure the Japanese government would soon carry out the policy that had been outlined.

Ties that Bind?

[6](#). (C) The Ambassador's approach to the Minister dovetails very well with the strong new position of engagement laid out by the Japanese delegation at the ICG. The only disconnect between the two was the mention of using greater engagement to encourage political dialogue; a theme Japan supported at the ICG, but which the Ambassador apparently failed to mention during his meeting with U Soe Tha. The Ambassador's assertion that Japan will act independently of other parties, and his remarks on the importance of Japan's ties with ASEAN, and thus Burma, might be interpreted as a reminder by the Ambassador of Japan's importance as a regional power -- competing as it is with the aggressive diplomacy in Burma of China and India.
Martinez